- **62 percent of the Nasir Bagh respondents said that they would not be willing return to Afghanistan even if humanitarian assistance were to be provided to them in their home provinces.** The question is often used in surveys to gauge whether a displaced person is in fact a refugee, i.e., has a well-founded fear of persecution or has fled Afghanistan because of war or violence. Many respondents noted that returning was unthinkable due to social breakdown and the failure of the Taliban to provide even the most basic necessities for maintaining livelihoods.

Q: If you could receive humanitarian assistance in your home province, would you be willing to return to Afghanistan?

No	143	61.90%
Yes	84	36.36%
No Response	3	1.30%
Do not know	1	0.43%
Grand Total	**231**	**100.00%**

- **94 percent of respondents said that war and violence had played a primary role in their decision to leave Afghanistan. Six percent gave drought or economic reasons alone to explain their flight.**

Q: Why did you leave Afghanistan and come to Pakistan?

Drought/Econ	13	5.63%
Econ/Persecution	3	1.30%
Persecution	15	6.49%
War/Violence	186	80.52%
War/Violence/Econ	9	3.90%
War/Violence/Pers	4	1.73%
No response	1	0.43%
Grand Total	231	100.00%

- **74 percent of Nasir Bagh's residents are Pashtun, while 23 percent are Tajik.**

Q: What is your ethnicity?

Arab	4	1.73%
Pashtun	172	74.46%
Shara	1	0.43%
Tajik	53	22.94%
Tajik/Pashtun	1	0.43%
Grand Total	231	100.00%

- **Families from Kabul and north of Kabul were significantly less likely to indicate that they would return to their provinces of origin if deported.** This result suggests that families from these provinces are more likely to become IDPs than families deported to Nangarhar. While 53 percent of Nangarhar families indicated they would return to their provinces of origin, only 12.5 percent of residents from Baghlan, 28 percent of the residents from Kabul, 22 percent from Konar, and 35 percent from Laghman reported the same.

- **58 percent of the camp's residents are from Nangarhar province.**

Q:What province are you from?

Nangarhar	135	58.44%
Kabul	41	17.75%
Laghman	23	9.96%
Konar	9	3.90%
Baghlan	8	3.46%
Konduz	5	2.16%
Parwan	3	1.30%
Paktya	2	0.87%
Kapisa	1	0.43%
Balkh	1	0.43%
Wardak	1	0.43%
Lowgar	1	0.43%
Takhar	1	0.43%
Grand Total	231	100.00%

- **While Nasir Bagh's residents arrived in Pakistan over a long period of time, a majority of the camp population has lived in Pakistan for over 15 years.**

Q: When did you leave Afghanistan and come to Pakistan?

0 to 1 years ago	4	1.73%
2 to 5 years ago	37	16.02%
6 to 10 years ago	39	16.88%
11 to 15 years ago	17	7.36%
16 to 20 years ago	58	25.11%
21+ years ago	76	32.90%
	231	100.00%

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE
PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN

SURVEY OF THE POPULATION OF NASIR BAGH CAMP
Peshawar District, Pakistan
July 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IRC conducted a survey of 231 families in the Nasir Bagh camp in late June and early July 2001. The goal of the survey was to gain more accurate information about residents' intentions given the impending closure of the camp by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) and the proposed screening of residents for refugee status by the GoP and UNHCR. Survey teams asked 13 questions, collecting data regarding residents' provinces and districts of origin, ethnic background, reasons for leaving Afghanistan, willingness to return to Afghanistan, thoughts regarding the closure of the camp and the proposed screening process, and most probable courses of action if they are "screened out" and deported.

Some specific results:

- **80 percent of the survey's respondents either do not know where they will go or plan to remain in Pakistan when the camp closes.**
- **87 percent said they do not have financial resources to rent a home elsewhere in Pakistan if they are forcibly evicted from the camp.**
- **62 percent said that if they were deported to Afghanistan, it is possible that they would try to return to Pakistan.**
- **More than 50 percent indicated that they would not return to their home provinces if they were deported to Afghanistan.**
- **62 percent said that they were not willing return to Afghanistan even if humanitarian assistance were to be provided to them in their home provinces.**

Recommendations:

1. *The Government of Pakistan's first priority should be to identify and secure alternative accommodations for the large number of Afghans who* *<u>inevitably</u>* *will remain in Pakistan after the closure of Nasir Bagh.* Whether accomplished by screening residents for refugee status or by forcible eviction, closing Nasir Bagh – without first securing adequate housing in another location – will result in the displacement of large numbers of Afghans in Peshawar and surrounding areas. Only

after adequate housing is available will the government be able to vacate Nasir Bagh without creating a crisis elsewhere.

2. *UNHCR and government authorities should note the seriousness of the humanitarian situation inside Afghanistan and recognize that that situation will dictate the ultimate consequences of their actions in Nasir Bagh.* The survey results indicate that large numbers of Nasir Bagh residents, if deported, will either try to return to Pakistan or become displaced within Afghanistan. Their return to Pakistan (without homes and with fewer resources) will compound tensions on one side of the border, while their displacement inside Afghanistan will only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis on the other. These are points which all involved parties should contemplate carefully.

3. *The GoP and UNHCR should be prepared to find substantial numbers of persons in Nasir Bagh who qualify for refugee status when the proposed screening is conducted.* Sixty-two percent of the residents indicated an unwillingness to return to Afghanistan even with humanitarian assistance provided in their home provinces, and sixty-two percent indicated they would try to return to Pakistan if deported. These figures suggest that many Nasir Bagh residents may have well-founded fears of persecution in Afghanistan.

4. *UNHCR should carefully review and monitor its current voluntary repatriation program.* Given the growing hostility that has been demonstrated toward Afghans in Pakistan, we believe it is legitimate to ask whether recent repatriations have truly been "voluntary." Moreover, we encourage UNHCR to consider seriously whether hasty, large-scale repatriations to Afghanistan at this time are, as a matter of policy, desirable given the seriousness of the humanitarian situation there.

5. *UNHCR and the GoP should conduct a more extensive information campaign within Nasir Bagh to inform families of their options and the processes they will undergo in the upcoming months.* Discussion with residents in the final days of the survey revealed that many families did not know basic facts about the closing of the camp, including that a screening to determine refugee status would take place and that a voluntary repatriation program had already begun.

BACKGROUND

Established on the outskirts of Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan, Nasir Bagh was one of the first refugee camps created by the GoP in the late 1970s, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The camp's population has continued to grow over the last 23 years, as Afghans fled first war between the Soviets and the mujahideen and later civil conflict among the mujahideen and between the mujahideen and the Taliban. The camp's current population is believed to stand at 120,000 residents (approximately 18,000 families).

A large settlement spread over several square miles of land, Nasir Bagh appears more like a large, thriving village than a refugee camp. Residents live in simple mud houses arranged along a labyrinth of dirt roads, ravines and footpaths. The homes are provided

with electricity but no plumbing. Families tend to live in compounds facing courtyards and surrounded by tall mud walls. For survival, many families raise cows, goats and chickens within the compounds or depend on handouts from aid agencies. Many also work in shops or as manual laborers in Peshawar. Residents obtain water from the many wells in the camp, and the GoP and the United Nations provide health care at three Basic Health Units.

Because of Nasir Bagh's long existence, many of the camp's younger residents were born and raised there and, therefore, are theoretically eligible for Pakistani citizenship under current law – a little acknowledged fact. Many families have few if any connections to Afghanistan: they were educated in one of the camps schools, they work in the city of Peshawar, and their friends and extended families all live in Pakistan.

Pakistan announced plans this spring to close Nasir Bagh. The closure comes after Pakistani authorities and a group of private citizens signed an agreement by which the entire Nasir Bagh area would be razed to make room for a new housing development for Pakistani citizens. While the issue of the camp's closure has been around for years, it was only in April this year that the government finally ordered Nasir Bagh's residents to vacate the camp, setting a closure and evacuation deadline of June 30.

Over the same months this spring, the GoP and UNHCR have been planning to conduct a screening of Afghans residing in Nasir Bagh and New Jalozai camps to determine which of them will receive "temporary asylum" in Pakistan as refugees, and which will have to return to Afghanistan. As the June 30 deadline arrived, Pakistan and UNHCR had yet to conclude the Memorandum of Understanding that would provide terms and criteria for the screening. Pakistan decided to permit the Nasir Bagh residents to remain in the camp for three more months to allow the survey to proceed. UNHCR, meanwhile, has begun a voluntary repatriation program for residents wishing to return to Afghanistan. More than 500 families have since volunteered from both Nasir Bagh and the New Jalozai camp, although observers have raised questions as to whether these families' decisions to return were truly voluntary given the environment of fear and uncertainty at the camp. Several families are known to have rescinded their offers to return voluntarily after learning that a screening would take place.

THE IRC SURVEY

IRC interviewed 231 randomly selected families in Nasir Bagh over the course of two weeks. Because no accurate map of the camp exists, survey teams chose different areas of the camp each day within which to conduct interviews. Moving in a single direction until the boundary of the designated area was reached or a four-hour daily time limit was met, surveyors selected residences to approach for the survey located approximately 20 meters from one another. Each surveyor interviewed between 10 and 20 families daily. As the survey progressed, the teams chose previously uncovered areas until they had made at least one sweep through each portion of the camp and were satisfied that some residents from all areas of the camp had been interviewed.

Once the camp had been covered, IRC analyzed the data collected for consistency by performing a split-half analysis.[1] We also verified the reliability of the sample by cross-referencing data from different surveyors and from different days of the survey to check for irregularities. Although the selection of households was not strictly random and the size of the sample was somewhat limited due to time constraints, we believe the results are reliable and present a general representation of the population of the camp as a whole.

Nearly every household approached for the survey agreed to participate. Occasionally, surveyors would select a household where the door was locked or no one was home. If a family member could not be located in the vicinity, the surveyors would move on to the next household. In addition, because a few female respondents expressed reluctance to answer questions about their families' intentions or likely courses of action, surveyors often asked for male family members to be present for the interview. If a male family member was not available, surveyors still proceeded with the interview and recorded answers such as *it is my husband's decision* as "no response." These limitations on the surveying were encountered very infrequently, and we do not believe that they compromised the representativeness of the sample.

As the questions were open-ended, answers were later categorized to allow for more coherent analysis. Surveyors took extensive notes to ensure that the respondents' answers could be accurately understood. For instance, if a respondent said he or she would return to his or her home province if she were deported to Afghanistan and then also added that they had no home in that province, the surveyor recorded the entire response.

The survey questions were as follows:

1. **What is your ethnic group?**
   Answers were straightforward and required no follow up.
2. **What province did you come from?**
   Answers were straightforward and required no follow up.
3. **What district did you come from?**
   Answers were straightforward and required no follow up. Many families did not know their district of origin and, instead, gave the names of their villages or towns of origin. Where possible, these villages and towns were investigated, using the best available maps of Afghanistan, and the appropriate districts were recorded.
4. **When did you start living at Nasir Bagh?**
   Answers were straightforward and required no follow up.
5. **When did you leave Afghanistan?**
   Answers were straightforward and required no follow up.
6. **Are you registered with the Pakistani authorities?**

[1] Split-half analysis is described in Martin, P. & Bateson, P. (1986) *Measuring Behavior: An Introductory Guide*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Data is divided randomly into two halves that are then analyzed separately. If both sets of data generate the same conclusions, then sufficient data has been collected to ensure that the sample is representative of the population.

This question was intended to determine whether the respondent had been registered as a "refugee" with CAR. We were interested in this piece of information because we had been informed by CAR representatives in the camp that those residents who were registered would be "screened in." At this time, however, it is not at all clear that "registration" will be a criteria used in the screening; in fact, UNHCR has indicated that it will not be. Affirmative answers were recorded if the family stated that they had obtained either identification cards issued by the CAR (*shanakhti* passes) or rations cards issued by a UN agency.

7. **Why did you leave Afghanistan and come to Pakistan?**
In many cases, the interviewers asked follow up questions to clarify answers. Responses were categorized into several categories:

War/violence
This category included answers in which respondents indicated that they left because of military activities near their home, conventional or otherwise, or injury due to armed conflict. This category also includes families who said they left Afghanistan after family members were killed in fighting, whether as combatants or civilians.
Persecution
This category included answers in which respondents indicated that they left because of fears of persecution at the hands of authorities within Afghanistan.
Drought and economic hardship
This category included answers in which respondents indicated they left because of the effects of drought or for other economic reasons. These included hunger, famine, food shortages, high prices, crop failure, lack of water, and an inability to find employment.
War/violence/persecution
This category was reserved for answers that included both of the mentioned categories. A family indicating they fled because their home had been destroyed and because they feared for their lives after having worked for the previous communist government would be included here.
War/violence/economic hardship
This category was reserved for answers that included both of the mentioned categories. A family indicating they fled because their home had been destroyed and because they could not find food would be included here.

8. **When the authorities close this camp, where are you most likely to go?**
Answers were categorized into several categories:

Do not know
Respondents who said "I don't know" were asked the follow up question: "If the authorities come and destroy your house or force you to leave, where are you most likely to go?" If the respondent again answered that she did not know, her answer was recorded as such. If, however, the respondent at this point indicated that the family would go to a particular place, that answer was recorded.

A portion of families also indicated that they would follow other camp residents or would ask UNHCR where to go. Because these answers indicated basic uncertainty, they were recorded as "do not know" responses.

Stay in Pakistan

Respondents who gave any answer indicating that they planned to remain in Pakistan if at all possible. These included families that:

- planned to find places to live in Peshawar or elsewhere in Pakistan;
- planned to stay at the camp until they were forcibly evicted or deported;
- planned to move to another refugee camp within Pakistan;
- planned to live on the streets.

Go to Afghanistan

This category was reserved for those who said they planned to return to Afghanistan.

Go to another country

This category was used for families who said they planned to move to another country besides Afghanistan or Pakistan.

9. Are you currently paying rent?

Answers were easily categorized into "yes" and "no" categories. Respondents who answered negatively were asked: "Do you have money to rent space to live in?" Those that responded in the affirmative were recorded in a basic category of people who said they could afford to pay rent, even if minimal, to live outside of the camp. It is understood that this category is in fact more inclusive than might be realistic, since families indicating they were currently renting spaces in Nasir Bagh may be unlikely to find residences outside of the camp at similar prices.

10. If you are interviewed by UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan and told that you must return to Afghanistan, what are you most likely to do?

The question was asked to try to determine what respondents would do if they were told that they would not be allowed to remain in the country after the screening process. It also assumed that the respondent would not be physically detained for deportation after being screened. (It presently remains uncertain whether Nasir Bagh respondents will be given any time after screening to return to Afghanistan on their own, an eventuality that would give many residents the opportunity to flee to other areas of Pakistan or abroad rather than returning.)

The responses were put into one of four categories:

Will stay in Pakistan regardless

This category was reserved for those who indicated they planned to or would try to remain in Pakistan until they were forcibly removed from the country.

Do not know

This category was used for simple "I don't know" answers, and answers in which respondents said they would "follow others" or seek UNHCR's help.

Will return to Afghanistan

Do not know but will not return to Afghanistan

Go to another country

11. If you are deported to Afghanistan, where are you most likely to go in the country?

The question was asked with the intent of discovering how many of Nasir Bagh's residents might become IDPs if deported. It is understood that a portion of the respondents would not face deportation. However, correlated with the respondents in the survey who would likely not receive asylum (as indicated by province and district, as well as reasons for leaving Afghanistan and willingness to return if humanitarian aid were provided), the answer allows for a rough estimate of the number of deportees that have a high likelihood of becoming IDPs. Answers were categorized into the following groups:

To home province

This category includes those who answered that they would return to anywhere within their provinces of origin, including their home villages, province capitals or districts.

Do not know

This category includes those who said they did not know, would follow others, or would rely on UNHCR or relief agencies.

Return to Pakistan

Many respondents indicated that they would simply leave Afghanistan again and find a way to cross the border, even though it is currently sealed.

To Kabul city

This category was used *only* for respondents who were not originally from Kabul city.

To Kabul city or own village

To Tajikistan or Iran

To the border region: A few respondents indicated they would flee to this region, much of it tribal areas where Pakistani national government authority is minimal.

12. If you are deported to Afghanistan, is it possible that you would try to return to Pakistan?

Answers were easily categorized into simple "yes," "no" and "do not know".

13. If you could receive humanitarian assistance in your home province, would you be willing to return to Afghanistan?

Respondents were asked to answer either "yes" or "no" and then asked to explain their answers. Answers such as "yes, but not as long as the war continues" were categorized as "no" answers because respondents were clearly unwilling to return under current circumstances even if aid were provided. Answers such as "No, not as long as the drought continues" were followed by the question: "Would you refuse to return if assistance could help ease the effects of the drought?" The answer to that question was then recorded as the response.

FINDINGS

- **80 percent of the survey's respondents either do not know where they will go or plan to remain in Pakistan when the camp closes.** More specifically, 46 percent of the respondents said they did not know where they would go, while 35 percent said they planned to remain in Pakistan, living on the streets, squatting at Nasir Bagh, or searching for new places to live in other refugee camps or in other areas of the country. Significantly, many of these individuals stated that they would remain at the camp even if doing so meant they could be physically harmed or killed. Seventeen percent, meanwhile, said they planned to return to Afghanistan. The implication of these numbers is that the closing of the camp—without careful planning—will do little to help create a lasting solution to Pakistan's refugee problem and could in fact do much to worsen it by putting tens of thousands of desperate Afghans on the street.

  It is worth noting that surveyors reported respondents expressing anger and fear at the prospect of being ejected from their homes. Some residents even stated that attempts to forcibly evict them may be met with resistance and perhaps violence.

Q:When Pakistan closes this camp, where are you most likely to go?

Do not know	106	45.89%
Stay in Pakistan	81	35.06%
Return to Afghanistan	39	16.88%
Go to another country	3	1.30%
No response	2	0.87%
Grand Total	**231**	**100.00%**

- **87 percent said they do not have financial resources to rent a home elsewhere in Pakistan if they are forcibly evicted from the camp.** This statistic excludes families who were paying rent at Nasir Bagh or were not paying rent but indicated that they could. Of those paying rent, monthly fees ranged between 200 and 600 rupees. Rents in Peshawar and elsewhere in Pakistan are usually much higher.

Q: Do you have money to rent a space to live in?

No	155	86.59%
Yes	24	13.41%
Grand Total[2]	181	100.00%

Q: Are you currently paying rent?

No	160	88.40%
Yes	21	11.60%
Grand Total	181	100.00%

[2] The figures do not add to 231 because the question was added on the second day of the survey, after 50 interviews had already been conducted.

- **62 percent said that if they were deported to Afghanistan, they would try to return to Pakistan.** The result implies that Pakistan will not settle refugee issues simply by deporting large number of Nasir Bagh residents, since many may return to Pakistan. In fact, by deporting Afghans, the country may only intensify its refugee problems: those who return to Pakistan may be forced to live on the streets or turn to more desperate measures to survive. While it is clear that some of the residents who said they would return to Pakistan would receive asylum in Pakistan, the result nevertheless points to the great need to create positive conditions for sustaining livelihoods in areas to which deportations and voluntary repatriations will take place.

Q: If you are deported to Afghanistan, would you try to return to Pakistan?

Yes	144	62.34%
No	72	31.17%
No response	13	5.63%
Do not know	2	0.87%
Grand Total	**231**	**100.00%**

- **More than 50 percent indicated that they would not return to their home provinces if they were deported to Afghanistan.** More than 50 percent of the respondents said that they would not return to their home provinces, indicating that a deportation would result in large numbers of Nasir Bagh residents becoming displaced within Afghanistan. More specifically, more than one third said they did not know where in Afghanistan they would go, while another 15 percent said that, not only did they not know where they would go in Afghanistan, they would likely try to return to Pakistan if they were deported. Only forty percent of the respondents answered that they would return to their home provinces if they were deported.

Q: If you are deported to Afghanistan, where are you most likely to go in the country?

To home province	98	42.42%
Do not know	79	34.20%
Return to Pakistan	34	14.72%
No response	10	4.33%
To Kabul city	6	2.60%
To Kabul city or own village	1	0.43%
To Tajikistan or Iran	1	0.43%
To the border region	2	0.87%
Grand Total	**231**	**100.00%**